

Commending Our Religion.

Beyond question there are multitudes of men and women who sincerely and earnestly desire the growth of the kingdom of God. They seek the conversion of the unsaved and the development of Christian character in those who are already disciples of Christ, and exhort, give, work and pray for the accomplishment of these ends. But considering the numbers engaged in the work of God and the expenditure in time and toil, the meagreness of results is distressing if not disheartening. Why is it that we reap such small harvests from our generous sowing? Why do the multitudes go their indifferant way in spite of the constant effort to win their attention to and interest in religion?

No comprehensive answer can be put into few words, for we must needs study the nature of man and of religion, take account of current influences and tendencies, discover the strength and weakness of organized Christianity, note all the factors in the problem, if we would speak the last word about the seeming impotence of religion in the presence of irreligion or non-religion. But without undertaking any labored investigation, certain facts of large explanatory value confront the man who is at all interested. They are so evident that they have been recognized and described and emphasized by multitudes, and the mere mention of them almost serves to classify one as a dealer in platitudes. And yet in spite of all that has been said, the Christian world is very far from realizing the significance of that concerning which so much is said and that with which it is so familiar.

No one doubts that Christianity is a historical religion, and no sane man will repudiate this element or consent that it be ignored in any estimate of Christianity. But however strong and convincing the historical evidence may be, it has not the power in itself to change the human heart and make the sinner a child of God. Multitudes of people who believe in God and accept the New Testament account of the life of Jesus Christ, give no evidence of having any interest in personal religion. Their indifference is not due to lack of knowledge, neither can it justly be ascribed to neglect on the part of the church. Many of these indifferent ones have been brought up in Christian homes, and are sought after by those who desire to see them identified with the church. Pastors have called upon them and exhorted them, church members have invited them to the house of God, and still they are unreached.

What is the matter? A partial explanation lies in our propensity to depend upon talk. The minister naturally and rightly trusts to his sermons as potent agents in reaching the hearts of the unconverted, and church members, with good reason, feel that personal persuasion is needed in order that neighbors and friends be won to Christ. For this conviction of pastor and people there is ample warrant in scripture and in experience. The fault lies not in the use of these agencies but in the divorce from the Christ-like life. This is no railing accusation against the members of our churches, not even an imputation that we who exhort men to turn to Christ are not sincere. As to the majority of professing Christians there can be no question but we cannot identify honesty of purpose either with comprehension of the essential elements of the Christian religion or with entire success in embodying that which is comprehended. It is just here that our weakness reveals itself. Either we do not realize the importance of character as an agent in the redemption of the world, or we are not disposed to make ourselves such Christians as we know we must be in order strongly to influence those about us toward God.

The Christian world does not lay sufficient stress upon the importance of having the "mind of Christ." Of course we all agree in declaring that the possession of our Lord's spirit is essential to worthy discipleship, but in our living we all do largely give the lie to our declarations. Many a man whose theology is of unquestioned antiquity and in agreement with the historic symbols does not hesitate to be unjust in his judgments. To a brother who differs from him he assigns motives and purposes that exist only in his own excited imagination. He fails utterly of any fair valuation of the worth or the work of the brother who will not pronounce his shibboleth. The spirit is not confined to the conservative. The so called liberal is often more narrow and unfair than the man whom he condemns. The fact is that judging righteous judgment is about the most difficult task that the Christian has to perform. When we have come to the place where we can credit the man whom we dislike with all the virtues which he really possesses, we have traveled far along the road which Jesus has laid out as the highway of his disciples. When we can talk about the man who differs from us radically in theology without depreciating his character or misrepresenting his work, the grace of God has done much for us.

This is only one of the manifold illustrations. Concerning gentleness, honesty, unselfishness, forgiveness, love and a host of other character qualities, the same words may be spoken. We talk lovingly and approvingly of these virtues, while not striving very greatly to make them our own. And the non-Christian world knows it. They look on while we wrangle, hear the bitter speech of a Christian about his brother, note the unforgetting spirit, detect the tricks and sharp practice, and then ask very naturally, why they should become Christians. Oh, yes! we know the answer that will be given, that one man's wickedness does not make

the righteousness of another, that the imperfections of Christians do not excuse others from coming to God. That is all true, but the fact remains that the failure of Christians to live out the spirit of Christ greatly hinders the progress of the kingdom of God. The Christian must be a better man than the non-Christian if he is to give the Christian life power in its appeal.

The world will never be saved to God by abstract truth. It takes life to affect life. Because Jesus not only knew the truth but was the truth, he has power over the hearts of men. In the measure that his disciples are truth and love and unselfishness will they make potent appeal to the souls of men. Trite words, these are, and they have been spoken often, but there are no words more significant for the church of God. As we live what we preach, as we show our fellow-men in the every day and common life what beauty and helpfulness there is in reproducing the tenor of Jesus Christ, we shall commend our religion to them; argument and exhortation alone can never do.—The Standard.

Spiritual Derelicts.

About ten days ago a staunch steamer was lost at sea. She had left Rotterdam and was speeding across the Atlantic, her officers watchful, but unconscious of the presence of immediate danger. Suddenly there was a crunching sound, the engines began to race, the sea entered the shaft tunnel, and in spite of the desperate work at the pumps, the water gained, and the steamer began to settle at the stern. The life boats were prepared, and in a little while the order to abandon ship would have been given had not the lights of another steamer been seen, and her attention attracted by rockets and other signals of distress. The story of the gallant rescue of that sinking steamer's passengers and crew, without accident of any sort, has been heralded throughout the world. The captain of the lost steamer, in accounting for the mishap, stated that his vessel was struck by a derelict in such a way as to break the shaft, and the broken shaft tore a hole in the vessel's side, through which the water poured faster than it could be pumped out, and that when the water reached the engine room and put out the fires, the steamer was doomed.

There is no more serious menace to navigation than a derelict. An iceberg makes itself known by reducing the temperature in its vicinity; submerged rocks, sand bars, and other similar hindrances are indicated on the charts. A derelict gives no warning of the kind and performs a deadly work. Many a fine ship has gone to sea and has never been heard from again, because it came suddenly upon a derelict and was sent to the bottom.

If the sea has its derelicts, so has the church; and as those of the former are a menace to all who "go down to the sea in ships," so do those of the latter destroy the lives of so many and cause them to make shipwreck of faith. When a man allies himself with the church of Christ, becomes a member of the household of God, and takes upon himself voluntarily certain vows that are related to his daily life, people are justified in expecting to see the Christian's life reflected in his life. The characteristics of the Christ should find constant and gracious expression in his life; for it is now, or ought to be, hid with Christ in God. He has yielded himself to Christ and ought to be willing to make any and every sacrifice and surrender that his allegiance to Christ demands. This may mean that he is to walk consistently before God and among men; and that he is to do only those things that are well-pleasing in God's sight. If he fails in this, his profession of Christ is worse than vain. It becomes a block of stumbling to those who are weak in the faith, and a source of grief to the church.

Many Christians regulate their lives by the conduct of others. A strong man will have many unconsciously following his example. Let him stand bravely for the best things, and many others will be stimulated to do the same. Let him ignore his covenant as a member of the church and indulge openly or privately in such things as are inconsistent with his profession and it will not be long before others perhaps already enfeebled in their adherence, will imitate his example. "If A. can do this thing, why may I not?" And why not? The Christian life sometimes involves abstinence, if not for one's own benefit, then for the sake of others. It is easy to speak lightly of what has been called "the weak brother argument," and to say that the argument is weaker than the brother, but it is well to remember that the man who advanced the argument, originally, and thus gave it Biblical sanction and authority was not a weakling by any means. It is far better to put Paul's principle into practice, than to be a derelict that may send some unsuspecting brother to destruction.

Christianity is judged by many persons by the character of its adherents. This judgment is frequently based upon the daily life of only a few individuals. This is, from the nature of the case, faulty, for it is impossible to judge correctly of the man's life, and it is manifestly unfair to pronounce Christianity a failure because one or two, or a dozen, or a thousand of its adherents apparently fail to fully exemplify the character and teachings of Christ in their own lives. Nevertheless, this is exactly what many persons do. It may be that they are insincere, and that their judgment is faulty, but their lives are influenced by their judgments, and their duties are fixed by their lives. While it is dif-

fault, if not impossible, to affirm or locate the responsibility in such cases, it is nevertheless true that the righteous, consistent, conscientious Christian, whose delight it is to know and do the will of God, it is a greater inspiration to uprightness in others, than the man who, having taken upon himself the vows of Christ's Church, disregards their binding character in the practical affairs of life.

Such a man in a spiritual derelict; a menace to all who are sailing on the seas of the present life. He is an offense to those to whom he should be an inspiration; his manner of life gives peculiar significance to the words of Jesus: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.—N. Y. Advocate.

"Tarry Ye in the City of Jerusalem."

BY REV. J. TWYMAN BOTER.

Christ's words here are suggestive to us especially during a season of self denial and prayer. They had not merely a temporal or passing significance, but they are a perpetual command to all the people of God, and especially to the people as an organized church. Jerusalem is symbolical of the home of the church. She is the place of preparation, and therefore the place of power. She is the beginning and centre of all Christian activity.

There were reasons why the disciples should go back to Jerusalem after the Ascension, they needed to study the peace and harmony of the Church. They did not know perhaps, that they really loved the new church, for they had been disputing sometime before this as to who should be the greatest, and they had not yet the power, without which they could do nothing. Strange, do you say, that the Master should send the little band back to Jerusalem to tarry an indefinite period, while the world was dying in sin! But he says, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem."

After they were there ten days, we can understand why the command was given. Soon there was perfect harmony and peace, for all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. Their love was most beautiful. Here was the grandest preparation ever made by Christians, here the truest meaning the name Jerusalem, was given. If you are ever puzzled as to the significance of Jerusalem, to the church of the living God, go with these disciples in heart and spirit for at least ten days and you will know more of the Jerusalem that now is, than all the dictionaries, encyclopedias and commentaries can possibly tell you.

The church needs to tarry in Jerusalem. We need harmony and peace. Let all in authority tarry in Jerusalem. Let everything that is said and written be in the spirit of the Psalmist's proclamation: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." We want the peace that Christ gave his people, the peace that the world cannot give or take away.

We want, too, a baptism of love. We have not yet attained the experience of the Psalmist: "Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Do you think there was any doubt about the Psalmist's position, any doubt about his love. I noticed the other day this sentence written about representative Christians: "The outside world is sorely puzzled in trying to find out whether these Christians really love one another." May we not tarry in Jerusalem till there shall be no doubt even in the mind of the outside world as to whether there is love among all who serve Christ?

The Church will not be perfect in this world; she will have her faults. But a man with love will speak tenderly of her. "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem," said the Lord through Isaiah. Everything will appear different to us if our hearts are filled with warm love for the church and the people of God. "Except a man have the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. This is the spirit of love, and this spirit is the greatest power in the world. "And now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three; and the greatest of these is love."

Let us tarry to build up the walls of Jerusalem. Our work at home is suffering. We have made the Board of Home Missions our sentinel upon the watch-tower. The call has gone forth for help. It is not that the walls are being broken or that there is danger? When the Jews returned from captivity their first work was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. They had been crumbled because of their former sin and neglect. Though they were mocked, yet they built the wall, for the people had a mind to work.

Now Jerusalem is in a special sense our home work. Her walls must be made secure. We must be home missionaries in the broadest sense. If our home work is neglected, our foreign work to the same, or greater extent, will be ineffectual. Our dollar becomes so small abroad when we are so neglectful at home. We have associated with the word "heathen" the sense of dullness and stupidity. The heathen is an enemy till he is made a friend by the blood of Christ, and till this is done, he will watch with scrutiny for the broken walls of Jerusalem.

Let us be guided by the Master's command and tarry in Jerusalem. I am an optimist in all my views concerning the future of Zion. I would like to see the day hasten when there may be no doubt in the mind of any one about the church's future. There is becoming more and more a yearning for the Spirit's power. We may yet have a pentecostal baptism. Lord, take not Thy Holy Spirit from us.—New York Observer.